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REVIEWS

The Origin of the German Carnival Comedy. By J. MAXIMILIAN RUDWIN. New York: G. E. Stechert & Co., 1920.

Dr. Rudwin presents in this monograph the results of his investigation of the relation of German Carnival Comedy to the pagan rites performed annually by many primitive peoples to insure fertility. Among these rites were the expulsion of Death or Winter, a struggle between Winter and Summer, the procession, even in inland places, in which a *carrus navalis* or ship-cart containing emblems of fertility played the important part.

The author has brought together the evidence showing how wide spread among primitive nations and yet how similar in practice and spirit these rites were. He points out the survival in Carnival comedy of certain themes and types of characters borrowed from these rituals. Furthermore, he calls attention to the similarity of the ancient mime and the medieval carnival play in their use of marital infidelity as a motive, their ridicule of the Jew, monks, and peasants, their conception of female characters, etc. The explanation of this similarity, according to Dr. Rudwin, may be "due to their similar origin in the magical rites of the fertility worship, although foreign influence coming on the top of an independent growth in the Germanic Carnival customs need not be altogether denied" (p. 51).

Thus, Dr. Rudwin presents in a new field, strong evidence of the influence of the pagan rites to insure fertility in the origin and development of drama. Attending all investigations of this kind there is always the danger of ascribing customs, which are similar, to a common ritualistic origin, instead of regarding them as merely parallel customs due to their common origin in the human mind. However, except in somewhat minor instances, Dr. Rudwin has successfully avoided this pitfall which besets the path travelled by Frazer and his followers. Yet one cannot accept unreservedly the theory, based perhaps on a statement by Mr. Cornford, that the motive of resurrection from Hades found in the ritual "is employed in the Attic comedy when Æschylus is fetched up from the abode of the shades by the god of tragedy" (p. 23), since, as Mr.

Cornford has pointed out, it is hardly fair to lay too much stress upon the resurrection in the *Frogs* "because the whole conception of the plot demands that it shall be modelled on the Descent into Hades."¹ Furthermore, in two passages (pp. 24 and 44), Dr. Rudwin expresses the opinion that the motive of resurrection could not be used as a comical plot. On the other hand, although Mr. Cornford rightly minimizes the motive of resurrection in the *Frogs*, he gives enough other instances of the use of this motive to justify fully his statement: "If we look again at the series of Aristophanic plays, we shall not merely find isolated vestiges of this motive of resurrection, or rebirth, or renewal of life, but we shall see how it governs, in several cases, the general course of the action after the Agon."²

Also, Dr. Rudwin is perilously near the pitfall of Frazerism, when he says that "the *Antichoria*—the half-choruses performing antiphonally at the Easter service, in which the roots of the Church drama are found—may, indeed, have been adopted from the heathen spring ritual where, in their original function, they represented two opposing groups in the contest of Summer and Winter" (p. 51). Antiphonal song is so natural a procedure that it scarcely seems necessary to explain its use in any form of worship in which a chorus is employed; but, even if it be granted that *Antichoria* in the Christian ritual sprang from the pagan spring *dromenon*, the origin of sacred drama is not to be sought in *Antichoria* or any other dialog spoken or sung, but in the mimetic element in the ritual itself. The impulse toward mimesis is caused by the emotional ecstasy attendant upon religious rites which causes the celebrant to become an impersonator and makes the ritualistic celebration of an event a representation of that event.

Although Dr. Rudwin shows that certain episodes and characters are common to both the ritual and Carnival comedy, he does not find the "root of the Carnival plays" in what he calls the "ritual drama" or in any incident in the ritual such as the conflict of Spring and Winter. He says:

"Mr. Cornford's attempt to lead back the old Attic comedy through the folk-play to the ritual procedure, which he recon-

¹ F. M. Cornford, *The Origin of Attic Comedy*, London, 1914, p. 85.

² *Ibid.*, p. 84.

structed with great ingenuity, has, in the opinion of the writer, not been very successful. The old Attic comedy, like the medieval German farce, does not show in its plot a similarity to the ritual sufficient to warrant any such assumption. The ritual in itself had but few histrionic possibilities. The parts of the medieval religious drama which were based on the church liturgy also proved incapable of dramatic evolution. Between the ritual and the drama, as we understand it, there yawns a mighty chasm. We can have drama only when a wholly new content has been given to the ritual. This fact applies with special force to comedy. The ritual plot, above all, can not be used for comical drama. The marriage, which forms the canonical ending of all our comedies, may, as Cornford suggests, be a survival of the ritual of the union of the sexes, but the central episode of the ritual drama, the death and resurrection of the fertility god, would in comedy, as Cornford admits, be either too serious or too silly" (p. 24).

Dr. Rudwin holds that the impersonators of the demons were the connecting link between the dramatic ritual to insure fertility and the Carnival comedy. He says that "episodes were added which had no connection with the magical ceremonies," and that the clownish demons "were asked to imitate certain individuals in the throng . . . and gladly exhibited their mimic talent" (pp. 38-39). The reviewer infers that, in Dr. Rudwin's opinion, the "new content" was thus given to the ritual. The author points out, on the authority of Semos, that a similar development took place among the Greeks when "the *phallophori* after having sung phallic songs ran forward and ridiculed persons in the audience" (p. 39). But does not the fact that such actions of *phallophori* probably helped to produce the parabasis—the undramatic element in Greek comedy—need to be noted and perhaps explained, if one seeks to derive a certain form of drama from such a custom?

Dr. Rudwin concludes a part of his thesis by expressing the opinion that all drama is of demonic origin and that "the Church Fathers were indeed right when they declared that all dramatic arts come from the devil" (p. 39). True as this statement is from the point of view that certain pagan gods, such as Dionysus, were merged in the medieval conception of the devil, the reader is at times troubled by the thought that in this passage and elsewhere the words "demonic" and "demon" might perhaps better be spelled "daimonic" and "daimon."

Dr. Rudwin's theory and conclusions are, at least, very interesting; and in view of the modern tendency to find the origin of

all episodes of all kinds of drama in the pagan ritual to insure fertility, it is striking to find a scholar who does not explain all the elements of the special kind of play he is investigating as arising from this ritual. From the evidence which Dr. Rudwin has presented in this monograph, and which he frankly admits is fragmentary, the reviewer sees no reason to disagree with the conclusions taken as a whole. It is perfectly possible that the relation of German Carnival comedy to these rites is to be explained in this way. On the other hand, since the reviewer shares the hope with Dr. Rudwin that investigation along these lines will be continued, it may not be out of place to make certain comments on the passages quoted above and some suggestions for the guidance of future investigators.

In the first place, certain stages in the development of drama from religious rites should be recognized. The ritual becomes first a dramatic ritual whenever the mimetic element is introduced. The dramatic ritual, in turn, becomes a ritualistic drama when the mimetic element overshadows the religious element. Drama develops from the ritualistic drama as soon as those concerned with its production cease to be conscious of any tradition which causes the dramatic representation to assume a certain form or employ certain themes and characters, although reminiscences of the original ritual may be plain to the investigating scholar.

Thus the reviewer cannot agree with Dr. Rudwin's idea that between "the ritual and drama, as we understand it, there yawns a mighty chasm," and that "we can have drama only when a new content has been given to the ritual." The figure of speech is rather unfortunate. Perhaps it would be better to say that between ritual and drama there is a twilight zone. Also, drama may exist when the old content of the ritual has undergone a slow development into a content which seems new but which, if analyzed, shows unmistakable traces of its origin. Certainly no chasm yawns between the Christian rituals of Easter and the highly developed French mysteries of the Passion and Resurrection. Thus the reviewer at least does not understand why Dr. Rudwin states that "the parts of the medieval drama which were based on the Church liturgy also proved incapable of dramatic evolution." Such a striking theory needs to be backed up with much evidence.

Even if Dr. Rudwin would not accept our theory of the develop-

ment of ritual into drama, had he stated his own theory by using some such terms after defining them, he would have avoided a certain amount of obscurity. For instance, one is not sure what Dr. Rudwin means by "ritual drama," although one may guess that he means "dramatic ritual." Furthermore, what is the "ritual plot" in this connection? If a ritual is dramatic enough to have a "plot," the reviewer can scarcely agree that "the ritual had but few histrionic possibilities." Indeed, the histrionic possibilities in most religious rites are the strongest foundation of the theory that drama springs from worship in a ritualistic form.

Dr. Rudwin says, "the root of the drama we will find neither in this (conflict of Spring and Winter) nor in any other incident in the ritual" (p. 24). What does he mean by the word "drama"? Does he mean conscious mimetic representation either by physical actions or sounds or both? He says elsewhere, "drama is only reached when imitation or representation extends to action" (p. 29); but since he fails to define by the word "action"—a word of many meanings as applied to drama—the statement is so obscure that the reader is not helped to understand the word "drama" in either of these passages.

Also, in regard to the influence on drama of the conflict of Spring and Winter which appears in the ritual, the reviewer is convinced that this episode produced the well-defined *agon* or combat in Attic Comedy, and that the reason there is no *agon* on the stage in early Greek tragedy is due to the fact that tragedy was not an outgrowth of this ritual.³ The *agon* of the ritual may have had more influence on drama than Dr. Rudwin admits.

Dr. Rudwin holds the opinion that Mr. Cornford's theory of the development of Attic comedy is not tenable; but he does not offer enough evidence to convert one to his view. Mr. Cornford has shown many survivals in the Old Comedy of some of the very elements of the ritual which Dr. Rudwin discusses; and the present writer has also tried to show that Mr. Cornford's theory explains the dramatic technique of Old Comedy, while the construction of Greek tragedy shows that that form of drama cannot have developed from the same ritual.⁴ Thus, when Dr. Rudwin says that "the ritual plot, above all, cannot be used for the comical drama," we

³ D. C. Stuart, *The Origin of Greek Tragedy*, T. A. P. A., Vol. 57, p. 173.

⁴ D. C. Stuart, *op. cit.*

cannot agree with his statement that Attic comedy does not show in its plot a similarity to the ritual to warrant the assumption that Attic comedy can be led back "through the folk play to the ritual procedure." Dr. Rudwin admits that the marriage which forms the canonical ending of all our comedies, may, as Cornford suggests, be "a survival of the ritual union of the sexes." But the significant part of this theory of Mr. Cornford is the fact that the marriage ends almost every extant comedy of Aristophanes in spite of the fact that, as Mr. Cornford says, "there is nothing whatever in the previous incidents of an Aristophanic plot to prepare the spectator for any such conclusion."⁵ On the other hand, marriage, as a canonical ending of modern comedies, is not an outgrowth of Aristophanic comedy and hence of the marriage episode in the ritual. It is rather an outgrowth of the construction of late Greek tragedy of the Euripidean type whence it came into New Comedy, which, in turn, gave it to modern comedy.

One of Dr. Rudwin's chief reasons for rejecting Mr. Cornford's theory is that the motive of death and resurrection "would in comedy, as Mr. Cornford admits, be either too serious or too silly." In regard to the resurrection, we have already pointed out that Dr. Rudwin, accepts in spite of this statement, the episode of Æschylus' resurrection in the *Frogs* as being the result of ritualistic influence with less reserve than does Mr. Cornford himself. In regard to the death, as well as the resurrection, we still believe that Mr. Cornford has shown the influence of these ritualistic episodes in Aristophanic comedy. Mr. Cornford by no means dismisses the question of the influence of these motives on Old Comedy by his admission⁶ quoted by Dr. Rudwin. On the contrary he expressly states that "if our hypothesis is sound, we might expect to find some reminiscences of the death and resurrection motive clinging to the Agones in Aristophanes."⁷ He proceeds to point out these reminiscences and he concludes that "no one instance taken by itself would have much weight; but when all are taken together, and it is seen how constant this motive is, it appears to me that the probability that we have here survivals of an original simulated death of one or the other

⁵ Cornford, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁷ *Loc. cit.*

adversary is considerably stronger than we should expect to find it, even if we knew on other grounds that the hypothesis were true.”⁸ Thus, what Mr. Cornford means by his admission is that we must not expect to find the death or resurrection of a character actually enacted in comedy, but he does believe that death and resurrection in the ritual has left its influence in comedy.

Until much stronger and more definite objections are made to Mr. Cornford's theories, we cannot admit, with Dr. Rudwin, that “the ritual plot, above all, cannot be used for comical drama,” whether the German Carnival comedy used it or not. In studying drama it is always well to keep in mind the fact that there is no plot or situation inherently and unalterably tragic or comic. Whether a plot or a situation is to be tragic or comic depends upon the point of view of the playwright. Through a long period of development these serious religious rites had lost their solemnity until in Greek comedy they were burlesqued, and the very gods themselves honored by the ritual were degraded, as is Dionysus in the *Frogs*. Surely it would be hazardous to argue that, because the *Acharnians* burlesques the Dionysiac rites, Old Comedy is not derived from this very ritual. Thus, when Dr. Rudwin points out that “the motive of rejuvenation is only burlesqued in the Carnival plays,” the question arises as to whether Carnival comedy has not a closer relationship to the rites to insure fertility than Dr. Rudwin admits. The reviewer finds it difficult to accept this statement as evidence that the plot of the ritual cannot be used for comedy.

We cannot help feeling that Dr. Rudwin's arguments for his thesis would have been more convincing had he not attempted to set aside Mr. Cornford's theory of the origin of Attic comedy as untenable, and if he had not attempted to use certain statements made by Mr. Cornford in support of his own views. We must remember that the germ of drama contained in similar rituals may well develop along certain dissimilar lines. For instance, a parabasis may or may not develop out of the practice of ridiculing persons in the audience, without precluding the possibility of this very custom helping to produce German Carnival comedy, although, as we have said, this phenomenon would call for some explanation.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 83.

If in Attica the germ of drama in this ritual developed into Aristophanic comedy, in Germanic countries it may easily develop, as Dr. Rudwin points out, only into a degenerate folk-play, whereas the actors impersonating the clownish demons—or daimons—may well have improvised certain scenes extraneous to the ritual which became the basis of the Carnival play.

Finally, perhaps many of the separate points on which the reviewer disagrees with the author would disappear, if the terminology employed by Dr. Rudwin in this interesting study were clearer. And one does not need to be overflowing with the milk of human kindness to excuse the author for vagueness. One must only have tried to write about the origin of some form of drama.

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Cyrano de Bergerac par Edmond Rostand, edited by OSCAR KUHN and H. W. CHURCH. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1920. xiii + 255 pp.

Edmond Rostand. Cyrano de Bergerac, edited by A. G. H. SPIERS. New York: Oxford Press, 1921. xxvi + 387 pp.

There was need for a new edition of this play, always immensely popular in schools and colleges. The one brought out by Professor Kuhns in 1899 was made under the glamor of first impressions, before a general critical opinion of the play and its author had been formed and before the historical personage who furnished the salient points in the hero's character had been thoroughly studied. It served a useful purpose, but was unsatisfactory in both the introduction and the notes and lacked an essential of the successful modern text, a vocabulary. One is consequently not surprised to find that two new editions of the play have recently appeared.

The first of these contains an exact reprint of Professor Kuhn's text and introduction. Lines that contain the words *nombriil* (l. 484) and *cocu* (ll. 916-923) are still omitted, despite the general decrease in prudery of the last twenty years, and we still find in 1920, as in 1899, that Rostand "is yet young; it will be interesting to watch his future career. A few more such plays as